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Multi-stakeholder dialogue

Multi-stakeholder dialogue

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

Although the extent and quality of major group participation in the United Nations Forum on Forests have greatly expanded over the last five years, there remains a need to overcome obstacles and meet the challenge of further improving participation in the future. In an attempt to integrate major group participation more fully with the general discussion, the multi-stakeholder dialogue will be integrated into the plenary meetings of the fifth session of the Forum, including the high-level segment.

To continue to improve substantive contributions of major groups, the Forum may wish to consider methods of promoting associations and networks, especially in developed countries; regional consultations with major groups to broaden substantive participation; sharing its experience with the Economic and Social Council accreditation process; and expanding financial support for major group participation in future sessions and meetings of ad hoc expert groups.

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Introduction

1. The present note has been prepared to facilitate the multi-stakeholder dialogue at the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests. Discussion papers prepared by the major groups are contained in the addenda to this note.

2. The forum has made significant strides in establishing strong working relations with key civil society organizations over the last three years. There has been a marked increase in the interest of such organizations in the work of the Forum, as demonstrated by the growing number of organization-led initiatives organized in support of the Forum and an increasing level of participant registration in the sessions.

3. Pursuant to its resolution 1/1, the Forum holds a multi-stakeholder dialogue as a common element of every session. Through extensive consultation and collaboration, stakeholders are increasingly involved in the planning of multi-stakeholder dialogues and, through the processes of joint planning, have established strong cooperative relationships within the group.

4. In addition, in resolution 1/1, the Forum stated that the transparent and participatory practices established by the Commission on Sustainable Development should provide the basis for major group participation in the Forum. Given the development of stakeholder participation in the Commission, as well as relevant decisions taken at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, this provides for more direct and substantive involvement of international organizations and major groups in the work of the Forum.

5. The Forum secretariat has worked closely with major group focal points to enhance participation in accordance with the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

I. Preparations for the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

6. In order to integrate major group participation more fully with the general discussion, the multi-stakeholder dialogue will be interspersed throughout the two-week session and representatives of major groups will present relevant perspectives during the plenary and the high-level ministerial segment.

7. The active engagement of civil society organizations in the dialogue process is particularly important in ensuring that the discussions at the fifth session of the Forum encompass a wide range of perspectives and concerns. Civil society organizations are an integral part of implementation and their participation in the process can ensure a greater sense of ownership of the outcomes and more effective action on the ground.

8. At the meeting of the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Consideration with a View to Recommending the Parameters of a Mandate for Developing a Legal Framework on All Types of Forests held in New York from 7 to 10 September 2004 (see E/CN.18/2005/2 for the report thereon), some experts noted that goals and targets might be an effective means of accelerating implementation of the objectives embodied in the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a

Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests[1] and the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/ Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action. Building on this outcome, the major group focal points decided to develop discussion papers that would include priorities for action and goals for the future.

9. In addition, the major group focal points, in collaboration with the Forum secretariat, have organized a Major Group Forum to take place two days before the fifth session of the Forum. The Major Group Forum will provide an informal space, within which major groups, government representatives and intergovernmental organizations may share priorities for future action, discuss common as well as divergent goals and objectives in order to foster understanding of each other's positions, and explore opportunities for enhanced cooperation and collaboration both within and across groups. The outcomes of the Major Group Forum will also be presented at the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

II. Obstacles, challenges and proposals for the future

10. The level and quality of participation by major group representatives have improved since the Forum was established. However, there remain many obstacles to balanced representation. These include an imbalance in geographical representation within some major groups which can be attributed to a lack of financial and human resources within developing-country organizations. In many cases, however, the formation of broad networks or associations has greatly facilitated the process of securing substantive contributions on the themes of each session.

11. Regional stakeholder consultations would help to expand networks and achieve greater geographical balance. Annual or biannual meetings may provide organizations within each of the major groups with an opportunity to discuss substantive contributions to the session and decide on appropriate representation.

12. The high demand for consultative status, combined with the limited time allotted to the deliberations of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations of the Economic and Social Council, precludes consideration of applications for at least two years, at best. This obstacle was assessed in detail in the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (see A/58/817 and Corr.1) and recommendations for reform were made to the General Assembly (see sect. VII thereof). The President of the Assembly has proposed to undertake further consultation with Member States. The Forum may wish to contribute to the dialogue regarding accreditation by sending proposals for reform to the Council, and through it, to the Assembly.

III. Points for discussion

13. **Bearing in mind other discussions that will be held during its fifth session, the Forum may wish to:**

- **Receive additional input from member States on how best to facilitate more substantive coordination and participation of major groups and to broaden geographical balance, and on best practices for promoting and**

enhancing networks and associations of all types, especially in developing countries.

- **Receive additional input from member States on how best to broaden participation at the national and regional levels, and so improve contributions, through continued dialogue with stakeholder representatives on how stakeholder meetings could be organized at the regional level (in order to discuss inputs to the session and major group representation).**

- **Consider ways to contribute further to the United Nations system-wide dialogue regarding accreditation of non-governmental organizations by sharing its experience of the process and transmitting support for reform proposals to the Economic and Social Council and, through it, to the General Assembly.**

- **Consider how designated contributions could be administratively channelled and expanded so that the Forum secretariat could continue and expand its financial support for major group participation in the sessions of the Forum and in ad hoc expert group meetings.**

Notes

[1] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted* by the *Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex III.